

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended): A method of electronic payment for data transferred across a computer network containing at least one client, at least one server and at least one router which forwards data, the method comprising the steps of:

sending an electronic data request from a client to a server via one or more routers; and

sending electronic data in the form of data packets from said server to said client via one or more routers in response to said electronic data request,

whereby the operation of the server is governed by a server protocol which causes the data packet sent from the server to have associated with it a data field containing a value which represents a monetary worth of the electronic data in the data packet,

whereby each of said one or more routers has a router protocol which causes each router to forward the data packet in accordance with a routing table and to update the value contained in the data field by increasing the value to reflect the added monetary worth of the electronic data in the data packet associated with the action of forwarding the data packet.

2. (Cancelled).

3. (Previously Presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein each of said one or more routers receives an incoming data packet, containing electronic data and a data field associated with the electronic data in the incoming data packet, reads the value in the data field, calculates a new value based on the read value and the cost of forwarding the data packet, and forwards the data packet with the new value in the associated data field.

4. (Original): The method according to Claim 3, wherein each of said one or more routers checks whether the value in the data field associated with the electronic data in the incoming data packet falls within predefined parameters and rejects the packet if the value falls outside the predefined parameters.

5. (Original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the electronic data request has associated with it a data field containing a value which represents the commercial value of the data contained within the electronic data request.

6. (Original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein total accumulated values for transactions between routers or between routers and servers/clients are recorded.

7. (Original): The method according to Claim 6, wherein clearance payments are made between the operators and/or users of the routers and servers/clients, the clearance payments corresponding to the total accumulated values.

8. (Currently Amended): A system of electronic payment for data based on a hardware infrastructure of linked routers, data providers and data users, comprising:

at least one client;

at least one server for providing electronic data in the form of data packets in response to a request from a client and having its operation governed by a server protocol which causes each data packet sent by the server to have associated with it a data field containing a value which represents a monetary worth of the electronic data in the ~~data packet~~, data packet;

at least one router linked by a hardware infrastructure to said server and said client and having its operation governed by a routing table and a router ~~protocol~~, protocol; and

whereby the router protocol causes each router to forward a data packet in accordance with the routing table and to update the value contained in the data field within the packet by increasing the value to reflect the added monetary worth of the electronic data in the data packet associated with the action of forwarding the data packet.

9. (Original): The system according to Claim 8, wherein the router protocol also includes procedures for rejecting individual packets in accordance with pre-defined parameters related to the value of each packet on receipt.

10. (Cancelled).

11. (Cancelled).

12. (Previously Presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein at least one of said one or more routers has an associated data processor which reads the value in the data field associated with an incoming data packet received by said at least one of said one or more routers, calculates a new value based on the read value and the cost of forwarding the data packet, and forwards the data packet with the new value in the associated data field.

13. (Original): The method according to Claim 12, wherein the data processor checks whether the value in the data field associated with the incoming data packet falls within predefined parameters and rejects the packet if the value falls outside the predefined parameters.

14. (Previously Presented): The method according to Claim 1, in which the requested data is sent from said server to said client in the form of a packet, wherein said packet comprises a packet header and packet data, the packet data containing the requested data, and the packet header containing one or more address fields containing address information relating to the client and/or server and a data field containing a value which represents the commercial value of the requested data contained within the packet data.

15. (Previously Presented): The method according to Claim 14, wherein the data is sent via the router which reads the value in the data field of the incoming data packet received by the router, calculates a new value based on the read value and the cost of forwarding the data packet, writes the new value to the data field, and forwards the data packet with the new value in the data field.